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GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE DESERVES
**FREEDOM, COMMUNITY,
HOME,
DIGNITY AND HOPE.**

A SPECIAL EDITION ON
THE GLOBAL STREET PAPER MOVEMENT

THIS PAPER WAS BOUGHT FROM

venmo



@groundcovernews, include vendor name and vendor #

Street papers: providing a bright light and hope this holiday season

In addition to the regular biweekly issues, Groundcover News traditionally publishes one or two special editions each year where we bring together outstanding materials focused around a particular theme.

Groundcover News is a local newspaper, but we are just one fight in the global street paper movement. This special holiday edition aims to educate our readership on this global movement — the movement for community, rights to housing, freedom, dignity and hope — and of course to invite those readers to get involved and connected to this movement.

Street papers are magazines or newspapers sold by people experiencing poverty, homelessness or other forms of marginalization. They give people an immediate, dignified and legitimate way to earn money while addressing the causes of



LINDSAY CALKA
Managing Director

poverty through quality journalism and advocacy.

Today, as global poverty is affected by numerous crises — inflation, climate change, violence, systemic racism and conflict — street papers are needed more than ever.

Street papers operate as independent organizations: non-profits or social enterprises that reinvest their income into services to support people in need.

These services can include housing placements, employability training, emergency supplies of food and clothing, language classes and other social support programs that are all the more important today as we see governments around the world weaken or retract their welfare support systems.

There are currently 92 street papers around the world publishing in 35 countries supporting people in need, and advocating for the change needed to end poverty and homelessness for good. In 2021, 13.2 million street papers were sold around the world, putting \$17.9 million into the pockets of vendors who sell the papers.

We are a proud member of the International Network of Street Papers. INSP supports and connects these organizations through a global news agency, a community of

practice, joint advocacy, global campaigns and events. It also reports on — and provides a platform for — people with experience of poverty and homelessness so that they can share their stories.

We often say one of the biggest impacts of Groundcover News is the chance to be a part of something bigger than oneself; this is a feeling that our vendors, staff and volunteers experience alike. I often extend the invitation to our readership to come and be a part of this same “something.”

In September 2022, I had the privilege of attending the INSP Global Street Paper Summit, which amplified that feeling of connectedness even more. However, I attended it

see **BRIGHT LIGHT** next page ➡

GROUNDCOVER NEWS

CREATING **OPPORTUNITY** AND A **VOICE** FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE WHILE TAKING ACTION TO END HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed.

Vendors purchase each copy of our regular editions of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes towards production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for \$2, keeping all income and tips from each sale.

Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. Our paper is a proud member of the International Network of Street Papers.

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1/6	\$145.00	\$200.00	5 X 4
1/4	\$200.00	\$265.00	5 X 6.25
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full page	\$650.00	\$900.00	10.25 X 13

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Additional **20%** discount for money saving coupons

The story behind this issue's QR code

Many folks who contend firsthand with housing insecurity soon discover a troubling paradox. They seem to have become something like Schrödinger's Cat-Citizens, both invisible and hypervisible within the landscapes of the communities where they live.

When Jaz Brennan writes in the January 2021 issue of Groundcover News, “Do You See Us?”, she specifically asks the University of Michigan whether it has ethically responded to the unhoused community's desperate need for emergency shelter during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. (Spoiler alert: the answer was largely “no.”) More generally, albeit implicitly, she also calls on all Wolverines who consider ourselves among “the leaders and best” not to turn our eyes away from the unhoused people we encounter each day on the streets of Washtenaw County, people we pretend not to notice, people we do not to greet or treat as full fellow humans.

Yet at the same time the homeless population is treated as somehow unseen, they necessarily lead lives in the crosshairs of continuous collective scrutiny, as Jim Clark noted in Groundcover News back in July 2020. His testimonial “Public People” ends by recognizing, “Perhaps the worst thing about being a public person is the lack of privacy. There is no place to just hang out in your underwear (or naked for that matter), or plop on a couch in front of some distraction for hours at a time.”

And with that public living often



JOHN BUCKLEY
U-M English 221 Lecturer

comes public condemnation. Under a variety of circumstances, one may run afoul of certain public servants — sometimes law-enforcement officers, sometimes elected officials — who portray the unhoused as public hazards, nuisances and contaminants who diminish the general population's quality of life.

Earlier this year, it seemed important to explore this paradox when constructing my latest version of English 221, Literature and Writing Outside the Classroom, for the Fall 2022 semester at the University of Michigan. It seemed even more important to consider possible solutions, ways that people facing housing insecurity and economic injustice manage to retain human dignity and a platform for their perspectives amidst their various struggles. So this section of English 221 ended up with the subtitle “Illuminating Urban Invisibles.” It ended up with a course website hosted by the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. And it ended up with a classroom of students who remain committed to exploring resources like Peter

Horvath's Invisible People, the report Talking About Poverty: Narratives, Counter-Narratives, and Telling Effective Stories, and, perhaps most importantly, the collected community journalism of the International Network of Street Papers, especially the street paper you now hold in your hands, Groundcover News. After all, as the English 221 students have discovered, it's an incredible resource that offers “News and Solutions from the Ground Up”!

While I remain deeply grateful for my ongoing professional partnership with Groundcover News and its modestly superheroic director, Lindsay Calka, I didn't begin the journey. To the best of my knowledge, Groundcover News first started working with the University of Michigan when the Edward Ginsberg Center helped pair the newspaper with Carlina Duan's section of English 126 (Community-Engaged Writing) back in Fall 2020, which culminated in another handsome special edition you can still access (and read!) in the Groundcover News online archive.

But after receiving my own section of English 126 in Fall 2021, after meeting Lindsay and becoming inspired by her seemingly indefatigable advocacy for social and economic justice, I really wanted to continue the journey Carlina had started. So Groundcover News has become the community partner for my English 126 sections three more times (and counting!), giving first-year students many opportunities to learn about the complex set of issues

enmeshed behind the simple-seeming phrase “housing insecurity.” In July 2022, Groundcover News became the community partner for “News from the Ground Up,” an online class I taught through the Wolverine Pathways Summer Institute to rising high-school seniors from Detroit, Ypsilanti and Southfield.

As of this Fall 2022 semester, Groundcover News has been working with English 221.002, the source of the website (also titled Illuminating Urban Invisibles) accessed through the QR code you see in this issue. Please feel invited to scan the code, read through current students' online projects, click the links in the course bibliography, and otherwise explore what we've gathered together by gathering together.

Town and gown don't have to be opposites. No one needs to be both publicly exposed and perpetually unseen. Left to right, front to back, top to bottom, we're ultimately one global community collectively reaching toward the light. Come take a look.



➡ **BRIGHT LIGHT** from last page

alone, and it didn't feel right to be there without my team — the people who fight the same fight with me, everyday, in our community: the people who inspire me and brought me into this work. It was important to bring this connection back home and remind ourselves, and educate our readers, that they are a part of something bigger, too.

Street papers around the world have collaborated to create an animated video to help this communication a little more, to educate the public about the street paper movement and encourage people to support their local street paper this holiday season. The animation is narrated by Russell who sells Faktum, a street paper in Sweden.

The animation was produced by Swedish film studio Oh No Gravity with support from Faktum street paper in Sweden.

Watching this video, tears filled my eyes. It articulated the mission of our street paper — and the street papers around the world — better than I've ever heard before.

“You've seen us out there. In the rain and the cold. In the sun and the heat. In the avenues and streets. In the city. We sell stories,” narrates Russell in the first line of the animation.

“And yes, it is a business. A very personal one. Because, it's a way for us to elevate ourselves.

“We use the power of these stories to create a better situation for us and the people around us.”

We are all connected.

Read our stories.

Buy a street paper!

You can watch this video online by visiting insp.ngo. The video can be found on the homepage.



Groundcover News writers recognized as finalists in international writing compeition

The International Network of Street Papers hosts an annual competition to choose the top article written by street paper vendors from all the publications in the network. This year Vendor Manager Jim Clark's piece was chosen by a small internal poll to represent Groundcover News in the competition. When all was said and done, Clark's piece reached the semifinals, which means it was in the top five globally!

Clark, who was experiencing homelessness at the time he wrote the article, says his main reaction to finding out about how well he did was "disbelief."



CYNTHIA PRICE
Editor

"When I first heard the article was chosen as our entry, I felt like I couldn't deny that people thought it was a good article, but I didn't see what was so good about it," he says. "I do get good

ideas but most of the time I'm looking for feedback on them. I'm pleased that someone thinks they're good enough to print in a paper."

Clark takes writing seriously and very much wants to learn more about it. "I'm going to attend a lot of the workshops we're having with Ypsi Writes," he says, referring to upcoming events aimed at helping contributors improve their writing that he himself arranged. "I want to be able to write more than just memoirs."

He adds, "The subject of this article was very important to me in a lot of ways. So of course I'm real happy it was chosen for the semifinals."

Another impressive thing about this win is that it is the second time INSP has chosen a Groundcover News writer for the semi-finals. Lit Kurtz, who is still an active Groundcover contributor, as well as a very successful vendor, won the same honor in 2016. Groundcover News can be proud of its track record.

Both articles were featured as cover stories in the issues they were originally published in. Below, you can read Kurtz's nominated piece, and on the next page, read Clark's. On page 5, See how Groundcover's design has changed throughout the years!

Living "out here"

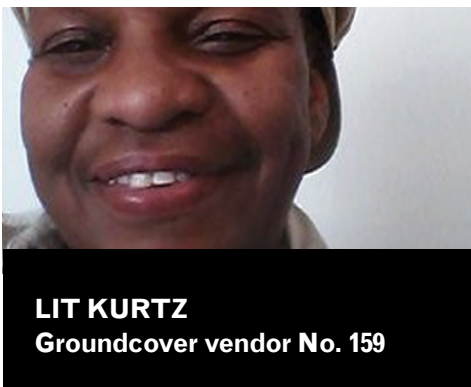
For some time, I've been telling folks that I lived "out here." I presumed that everyone knew what I meant. But a friend of mine recently asked what I actually meant by the term. That was when I began pondering what this destination I refer to as "out here" really means, especially in relation to other places I've been.

It didn't take much effort for me to remember my past. Our family roots are in Georgia, a place defined by peaches, pecans, Southern belles and Vidalia onions. My southern-born mother cooked collards, and though she forbade us to do so, ate them with her fingers in a glorious mash of cornbread and green liqueur. My growing up was defined by Michigan seasons: sledding, dandelions, marigolds and bushels of Baldwin and Golden Delicious apples.

Few words translate to describe my experiences now, atleast in First World terms. Homeless: characterized by showerless days and many sleepless nights. It is a place where I struggle to feel pretty and often feel vulnerable.

*I am homeless now.
I construct each day anew
To build a new home.*

Perhaps I have always done that — and in some ways, we all do. That is, we use the tools — emotional, spiritual and physical — to define and "construct" our space. The only difference is that now I am more cognizant of it, painfully aware that the carefully chosen building blocks I choose today will directly affect my place in the world tomorrow. For the first time, I have to create my own space to help me maintain a sense of



LIT KURTZ
Groundcover vendor No. 159

being. There are no indigenous plants in this place and the traditions are those of immediate survival. These traditions are ones that, although shunned by the larger community, are vital for a meaningful subsistence.

Take, for instance, the long-held tradition of canning, which at one time for me meant partaking in a yearly practice of food preservation that had been passed down through generations of aproned mothers and grandmothers. It was an annual family (and sometimes community) activity of preparation for the winter months. The term "canning" now links me closer to my earliest ancestors of the early hunter-gatherer tribes who were not only unable to preserve food, but could merely hunt down enough for subsistence for a limited time.

Canning in my new world bears no resemblance to its namesake. In this new world it means collecting as many tossed-out beer cans and pop bottles as possible in a day so as to be able to stave off hunger. It is often a daylong task that people schedule for certain days during the week to get enough collected to eat, do laundry, or finance other tasks for a couple of days.



Canning is the process of collecting tossed out beer cans and pop bottles and returning them for cash. Photo credit: Agence France-Presse.

The contrast between First World and Third World America is remarkable, with the average First World individual having no appreciation for the time and effort needed to occupy this space and still maintain a sense of balance and propriety among First World inhabitants, with whom we invariably must interact.

So many things are predetermined in First World America and already defined. But out here, there is no guarantee of plumbing, electricity, or furniture. Furniture is what I have sometimes missed the most. These are the "trappings" that informed my early life and transitioned me from childhood to adolescence, young adulthood — even menopause. Now in this abeyance, my spirit has often wandered in search of what I had before.

But while pondering, I had a gradual awareness that the seedlings I have planted here over many nights and

days have grown to form a new kind of place. It's a place where I've acquired patience, established new traditions, and found spots of respite in a world of unpredictability and confusion. "Out here" has become a place — though lacking physical boundaries, it has many other characteristics that make it separate from any I have ever had or expect to have again. It is a place where I have formed lasting bonds, gone through unexpected and unpredictable challenges, yet woken up to face another day with gratitude. Though "out here" is definitely a place where I never want to return, it is still one that has gifted me the ability to discern which things are important in life and which are merely fanciful or transient. "Out here" has given me wonderful memories that I will carry with me long after I have found my way back to the world where I once lived.

Originally published in Groundcover News in May 2015.

Where Oscar sleeps

Do you remember Oscar the Grouch from Sesame Street — the muppet that lived in a trash can outside the apartment from Maria and David? I was once told that Oscar represented the homeless population in the Sesame Street universe. The message I got from that was even though he lives in the trash and is always in "mal humor," he is part of the community and deserved compassion and respect from his neighbors.

In 2019, I was homeless in the real universe. Instead of being surrounded by friends in a peaceful barrio, I camped in the parks of Ann Arbor. In the parks, I found where Oscar sleeps. In the camps, there were remnants of past campers' garbage and abandoned property. Homeless people are already considered cast-offs, discards or wastrels. Having been homeless myself and placed in one of these camps by Michigan PATH (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness), it felt like I was being told, "this is what you are in society, so this is where you stay — in the garbage pit."



JIM CLARK
Vendor manager

The PATH program, run by Washtenaw County CMH, directs people to public parks, state property such as the Michigan Department of Transportation or on private properties such as the University of Michigan or local churches. The Ann Arbor Police Department contributes to the disaster and confusion by conducting "sweeps" or mass evictions from the very places PATH placed us in. These sweeps are initiated by the City of Ann Arbor, U-M, and MDOT. MDOT tends to look the other way but has also initiated sweeps and evictions (such as Camp Take Notice in 2014). The

sweeps are sudden and force the homeless population to leave behind equipment and personal belongings. It ends up looking like garbage since residents are forced to vacate their camp and are not allowed to take more than they can carry. The abandoned camps tell the stories of how people's lives, already in tragic shambles, are further humiliated.

Finally, there are the citizens who are environmentally conscious and use the parks to commune with nature. Ordinarily, they may be sympathetic to homelessness but are upset to see the trash left behind by sweeps. In some instances, people staying in parks are not accustomed to "camp culture" which subscribes to the "leave no trace" or "leave it cleaner than you found it" mentality. Indeed, when I was struggling with homelessness, coming to these places, thinking all these thoughts made me feel less respect for all involved. I felt this way towards the authorities who conducted the sweeps, my peers who left the messes that could have been

avoided, my community of neighbors who complain about the camps but do nothing to alleviate the problem, and myself for letting my life get so out of control that I must now sleep where Oscar slept.

The solution to this problem is to clean them up. If PATH, the police, the citizens (who also allow homelessness by supporting anti-housing legislation and anti-sentiment for the poverty-stricken), and peers started cleaning projects, I believe this would heal relations and become a platform for change. Recently I joined Washtenaw Camp Outreach, a volunteer organization that provides services to the homeless, and I am helping with a clean-up effort. This has been a rewarding experience that could help restore respect from County and City residents and self-respect for those who had to stay in the camps. If you are or were homeless or a volunteer, please join the effort to clean up the parks.

Originally published in Groundcover News in August 2021.

GROUNDCOVER
NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

MAY 2015 VOLUME 6 ISSUE 5

INSIDE

Generous neighbors — p. 2

Are you able? — p. 3

Limited perceptions — p. 3

The United Way — p. 4

Heavenly music — p. 5

Sign of the times — p. 5

Meals for seniors — p. 5

Local history — p. 6

Puzzles — p. 8

Coming out pt. 2 — p. 9

Immigration — p. 11

Spinach Strata — p. 12

Out Here
— p. 7

Where Oscar sleeps. Page 10

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\$2

JULY 2021 | VOLUME 12 | ISSUE 7

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Happy 4th of July! What do we like most about America? **Page 8**

MEET YOUR VENDOR:
JAMES MANNING,
PAGE 3

GROUNDCOVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

Where Oscar sleeps. Page 10

THIS PAPER WAS BOUGHT FROM

Snapshot of street papers in South America

TONY INGLIS
INSP Editor

Street papers have been present in Latin America for over 20 years, representing the diversity and scale of the street paper network. With active publications located in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia and with others present, at one time or another over INSP's existence, in Uruguay and Peru, the ethos and mission of street papers to empower those who are experiencing homelessness, poverty and social exclusion is alive. Here, papers across the region tell us in their own words about their work, and what drives their existence.



Mi Valedor, Mexico City, Mexico

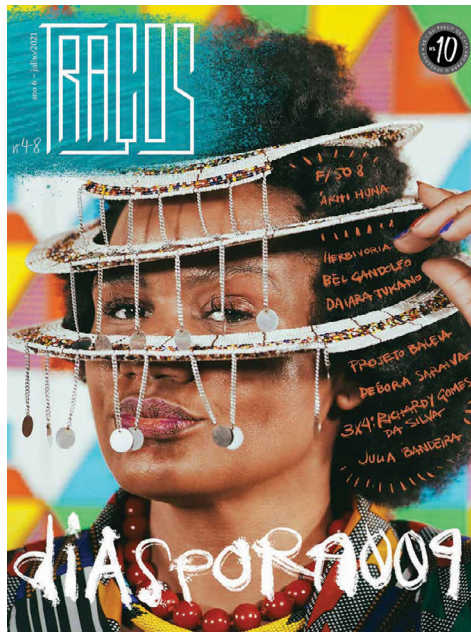
"Mi Valedor is a social project that — through a bimonthly magazine, workshops and the construction of healthy support networks — provides an opportunity to vulnerable groups, like those who are homeless, migrants, older adults and people with disabilities, for social and labor reintegration," said the organization's director Arturo Soto.

"Those who sell the magazine are homeless people or low-income people looking for an opportunity to get ahead. These people face different problems such as discrimination on the streets, including economic problems. The main one we deal with is exclusion from society."

The magazine's pages are "dedicated to documenting the wonder of a beautifully alive Mexico City, a place that is full of contradictions."

Soto continued: "At Mi Valedor, we seek to create an environment of equality that benefits vulnerable populations, who join the project as supporters: sellers of the printed magazine and as content creators for it. Your participation continues your skill recovery

process, and the sale is your legitimate and ongoing source of income."



Revista Traços, Brasília, Brazil

"Traços has been circulating for seven years spreading information and news about artistic and cultural initiatives in the city of Brasília," said Juliana Valentim, the street paper's editor-in-chief. Traços is one of the newest members of INSP's network, joining last year.

"The outlet is known as a reference for artists and promoters of culture," added Valentim. "In addition, we are a social project that works for the reintegration of homeless and vulnerable people into the field of work. From the sale of the magazine in places with large footfall (such as bars, restaurants and cultural spaces), the sellers — referred to by us as "cultural spokespeople" — manage to overcome a situation of extreme poverty, and pay for basic expenses such as housing, food and health."

These "spokespeople for culture" come from different backgrounds. "They are people living on the streets or with a history of homelessness or extreme vulnerability, of all genders, ethnic origins and ages over 18. They are linked to one or more institutions in our partners' network, which may be social assistance, education, health, culture or public security."

The award-winning magazine, which has recently also started operations in Rio de Janeiro, "addresses cultural diversity as its main theme and promotes a timely intervention in the field of social policies, considering the potential of culture to promote substantial social and economic changes. Traços offers information on cultural programming, interviews with local and national artists, as well as material on records, books, exhibitions, plays,

films and photography. Recently, the effects of tourism have been a key subject."



GENTILEZA*GERA*GENTIL MORRR*BELEZA*PERRFEI INODE*ERIQUEZA*P*NATUR US*NOSSO*PAI*CRIADORR*NAO*

Aurora da Rua, Salvador, Brazil

Aurora da Rua, a street paper based out of the city of Salvador in the Brazilian region of Bahia, has been running for 15 years, having been established in 2007. Originally published on newsprint, it later became a magazine in 2018, and is published bi-monthly by a team of volunteers.

"The salespeople are the most important though, more than the product," said the street paper's founder and director Henrique Guyader.



Aurora da Rua salespeople selling the street paper in the city of Salvador.

"Our themes always have to do with homeless people: their beauties, their challenges, their joys and pains, their achievements, their dreams. They make the voices and faces of an invisible people audible and visible. In 15 years of publishing, we have gathered a unique collection of topics about

homeless people," he said enthusiastically about the magazine's editorial outlook.

"Our vendors are all from the street or have passed through the streets. Over the course of 15 years, more than 350 homeless people have benefited from the paper in various ways, not just through income generation: gaining self-esteem, work training, autonomy, confidence, medical and psychological assessments. We have a code of conduct that was prepared by the first salespeople, is updated each year by themselves, and is published in the magazine, alongside a profile of a vendor in each edition.

"Many pass through the magazine and go on to new paths afterwards. It's as if the magazine was their first step towards insertion in wider society, in work, getting them back with the family.

"A great difficulty we encounter is chemical dependence. For this, our salespeople have the full support of the community of the magazine, with medical, psychiatric and psychological care. Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous organizations also work at the Aurora da Rua headquarters. We also offer shelter to those who are still on the streets and start selling the magazine through an accompanying housing project. It's about allowing them autonomy and dignity."

Recent innovations at Aurora da Rua, which has 40 people, including staff, volunteers and vendors, have included a partnership with local government to ensure the street paper can be sold in waiting rooms and bus platforms, where footfall is especially high (up to 30,000 people at the city bus station). People can also support through individual and corporate subscriptions.



see **AMERICAS** next page ➡

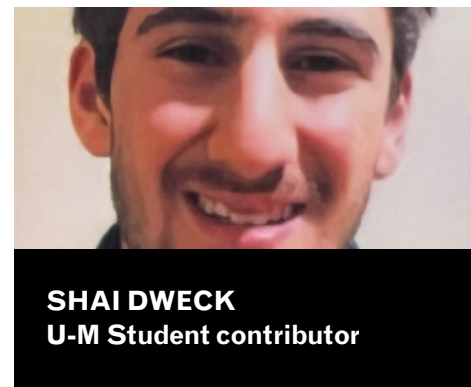
A glimpse inside the community within the community street paper

I sat in the basement of Bethlehem United Church of Christ, the office of Washtenaw County's street newspaper, Groundcover News, watching vendors meander in and help themselves to the spread of Mediterranean food in preparation for that evening's article review. The feeling was unmistakably warm.

These article reviews happen the first Tuesday after the release of an edition to preview the articles so vendors can better communicate the material to customers. Groundcover has been around since July 2010 as a platform for the community to share their voices and provide those experiencing poverty and homelessness with a self-sufficient way to make income as newspaper vendors. Managing Director Lindsay Calka began her involvement with the paper while an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan. She was a customer before volunteering and eventually becoming the design editor.

Many Ann Arbor residents are aware of and are customers of the street paper, but not many recognize the work that goes on behind the scenes, shaping close relationships between vendors and staff.

I sat around the large wooden table listening to the vendor's dialogue regarding what articles were the best from the last edition and what articles deserved attention as the current edition was being sold. I felt as though I were a welcome guest attending a family dinner. Everyone present went around the table and passionately shared their thoughts. Inevitably, some of this passion turned to intense debate as the



SHAI DWECK
U-M Student contributor

interchange of ideas flowed throughout the room.

When asked what drives vendors' constant participation in Groundcover, Calka did not hesitate to say that it was the relationships. "You can find purpose. Whether or not you're the best at selling the paper, you are gonna find a family here." According to Calka, one of the largest things overlooked in the production of Groundcover is the significant degree to which vendors are involved in production.

The vendors and staff are a diverse group from areas all around Southeast Michigan and beyond, before settling in Washtenaw County. When articles were raised describing narratives involving local communities, each vendor was eager to chime in about their experiences there, the history of the area, and the issues residents there face today.

Many vendors write articles in the paper on their own experiences, thoughts and expertise. Calka explained that even if there was no homeless population in Ann Arbor, there would still be a need for a community paper. According to her, the conversations and debates during article reviews are the important



Groundcover News vendors and staff on the October 15 issue print day. Photo credit: Jeremy Weine / The Michigan Daily.

topics relevant to the community. "If people care about it, that is what we need to be putting in the paper. If I discover at article review that the vendors care about it, we need to put more content about that issue in the paper," Calka said.

As the review ended, an older vendor stopped me and asked how I was doing, if I enjoyed the workshop, and if I had been able to get something to eat. He then brought over a magazine for me to look at, which detailed the lengths that many homeless people must go to feed themselves in the area. We locked eyes as he explained to me that although many homeless people in Ann Arbor "put themselves in this position," just as many are "put out," — evicted and are simply in need of aid.

I was struck by that interaction. I am a freshman out-of-state student at the University of Michigan. Ann Arbor is not my home, but it will be for the next four years. He was sharing an issue that he is passionate

about in his community in hopes that I might be conscientious and empowered to help as I begin to call Ann Arbor my home.

When asked to comment on that interaction, Calka was not surprised. "That is what people are experiencing over and over again when they are buying the paper from a vendor," Calka said. "When we can connect with others on something that is outside the norm of what we usually talk about, it really humanizes that person quickly; that is the power of the street paper."

Vendor Manager Jim Clark commented that he wished Michigan students were more eager to have these interactions and engage with Ann Arbor locals. "Lately, what I have seen is a lot more ghosting, just ignoring people," said Clark. "But I think Groundcover can bridge that gap. If the students get to know Groundcover, they can get to know the locals better and can read the people's stories."

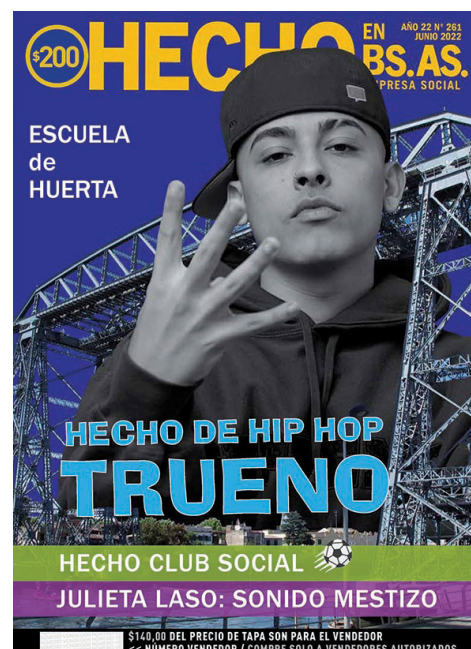
➡ **AMERICAS** from last page

Ocas", São Paulo, Brazil

São Paulo-based street paper Ocas" is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. Over that time, it has been publishing cultural and social articles.

"We have vendors who have lived in the city for a while and have been selling the magazine for ten years," said Ocas" editor Alan Faria. "There are others who buy magazines to sell them in addition to other jobs to increase their income.

"The magazine is produced exclusively by volunteers (editors,



journalists, photographers and designers), meeting virtually to decide what we are going to write about, though of course we have a physical place where vendors can come to purchase copies to take out to sell.

"The main things we cover are cultural events such as exhibitions, with artist interviews and social and political stories about LGBTQI+, homeless rights and racism."

Hecho en Bs. As., Buenos Aires, Argentina

"Hecho en Bs. As. (HBA) is an independent magazine sold in the streets by homeless or jobless people," said

one of the paper's editors, Micaela Ortelli. The project was founded in 2000 by Patricia Merkin, a long-time champion of street papers. Sadly, she passed away in 2020. The magazine has been at the forefront of producing journalism on environmental issues, with a focus on the community economy, human rights and culture, too.

"HBA provides these people the opportunity to earn an income, as well as a learning environment and a context for social relations," continued Ortelli. "Most of the vendors have been selling the paper for a long time. HBA is like a family to them."

Courtesy of the International Network of Street Papers

Street papers: Literature that is change

KILEY SILVA
U-M Student contributor

What does life look like on the other side? Why are things so different within our nation? Our climates, our demographics, our stories, they are all unique. We come from different homes, different pasts. Homelessness has its diversity in each location and person. Cincinnati, Portland and Berkeley each have its own community and those communities are portrayed and written about in small periodicals of thin paper. Each street paper focuses on different issues and caters to different audiences. Three papers from three different U.S. cities share many similarities, but how they impact and interact with their community can be different.

Cincinnati Living

Cincinnati, Ohio's largest metropolitan area, is home to the very raw and real street paper: StreetVibes. What does it mean to be homeless in Cincinnati? Humid, rainy, stormy summers mean soggy sleeping bags and dewy tents. Cold and snowy winters can mean death without the proper thermal attire. Frequent flooding means toxic waters and troublesome shelters.

To get from shelter to shelter, many homeless people may frequent the Steps of Cincinnati. There are many streets and pedestrian bridges in Cincinnati; one way pedestrians combat this impediment is by using the Steps of Cincinnati. These are a collection of 400 sets of city-owned staircases used as an optimal mode of transportation with 'by tourists and local pedestrians to walk between neighborhoods separated by hills. StreetVibes allows

civilians to understand these factors on a personal level through stories.

StreetVibes

On the many streets (and steps) of Cincinnati, Ohio, papers full of enriching material are sold each day and produced twice a month. The street vendors who work these streets often have their own work in the product they promote. StreetVibes, like many other street papers, focuses on homelessness and social justice issues. Its content is full of creative writing, poetry, articles, photography and interviews written by homeless and formerly homeless individuals. There are news reports and stories that are both local and global. The most popular are the local news stories.

What is unique about this paper is that the content is unedited. There are many spelling errors, capitalization mistakes and improper grammar, but it does not take away from the work. If anything, these imperfections are what make this street paper so unique. StreetVibes is the voice of the homeless people of Cincinnati. One voice I found belongs to a woman named Willa Denise Jones.

Willa Denise Jones is one woman who has published a lot of her work in StreetVibes and has her own book of poems she published in 2012 as well. "Lives That Matter" and "UPGRADING" are two poems I pulled from StreetVibes that stood out to me. "Lives That Matter" is a poem that Willa wrote, published on June 6, 2019. Though her i's may not be capitalized and her spelling may be off, her words and emotions are clear. A splatter of anger, frustration, confusion and humanness are all within her writing. She expresses how if we continue to only care about color, religion and whether a person works or not, it is going to be the death of us. Willa demands that whether you are rich or poor, you still need respect. She ends her poem with "so whether you support the homeless or not pray it won't be you someday."

I think she is trying to get at that if you could only know what it was like to be homeless, you would learn that being shown respect and human kindness is sometimes something that can make or break someone's life. I think she wants people to understand that no one really wants to be homeless, and it is not always their own fault. Willa is trying to show people that no matter where you come from, or if you live in a house or not, your life is valuable and it matters.

Her second piece is titled: "UPGRADING." To me, this poem is

very lyrical, almost as if it could be sung. She uses rhyme to emphasize her points and create memorable lines. "TRYING TO STOP THE HOMELESS FROM UPGRADING BY STOPPING POSITIVE INFORMATION, LIKE THE PEOPLE ARE BEING FLIPPED AND FLOPPED NOW WHO'S CAUSING THE SEGREGATION?"

The main point of this poem is that homeless people are not able to keep up with the time. There is a lot of inflation and gentrification and that means a lot of prices are rising. She writes that it is a burden to the homeless people who don't have much of a leg to stand on. She writes this poem in all caps which I find compelling. She is shouting from the top of her lungs that there is a problem that is getting worse because no one can hear the homeless people.

The tagline for StreetVibes is "advocating justice, building community." The website makes it very clear that there is a focus on social justice, that they are willing to go there. For example, one article that caught my attention was "Racism and Architecture" by Katelyn Lusher. Published on July 22, 2021, she writes about her observations of Denver, Colorado and compares it to what she sees at home. She mentions that "...Over-the-Rhine has been a predominantly Black neighborhood since the 1950s, the areas which have been 'redeveloped' are now primarily white spaces."

Over-the-Rhine was an ethnic neighborhood in Cincinnati; almost one-half of its residents were German immigrants. It got its name because residents said that crossing over the Miami and Erie Canal was like crossing the Rhine river into Germany. Small business owners are "flanked by hip restaurants and breweries ..." increasing living prices. She also mentions that most areas are built by white men, she raises the question "How will new architecture ever reflect the needs of the community that already exists there?" As she is referring to the additions that are being made to Over-the-Rhine in Cincinnati, she is pointing out how a predominantly Black community is going to be redeveloped to the needs of the white people.

StreetVibes street paper ultimately is the voice of the people. This paper best establishes a network of stories and humans who put themselves out there. They do this through a blog and forum called StreetVoice. There you can find many creative writing posts by the homeless community, easily available with each post tied to a unique title. It's where I discovered Willa D Jones and her story.

StreetVibes makes it really easy to hear the stories and emotions of the unhoused. You can even see how many people have viewed and clicked on these stories, and though not many people do, you can comment and spark conversations about what was posted.

Portland Living

The largest city in Oregon is home to the street paper Street Roots. Portland, Oregon is also home to a large population of unhoused people. Compared to Cincinnati, summers are more dry and sunny, with heat waves on occasions. The world's smallest park (two foot diameter circle) belongs to the city of Portland, along with many other more "normal" size parks. In fact, there are at least 179 parks and natural areas in Portland including Forest Park, the largest park in a major city in the United States. There are many homeless encampments around these parks.

There are many routes of public transportation because of the city's smart transit system. These elements can positively impact the lives of the homeless population, but are also topics discussed in the Street Roots papers. Portland is full of nature, life and stories. In such an urban area, there is always something going on. Street Roots concentrates on the stories of the community, focusing on social justice and political movements.

Founded in 1999, Street Roots is sold weekly on the streets and in the parks of Portland. Though they do have vendors who write for them, most of what was published is less raw than what we see from Willa D. Jones in StreetVibes. Overall, there seems to be less focus on the homeless population itself, even with the Vendor Profiles.

Vendor Profiles

Street Roots features powerful Vendor Profiles. A Vendor Profile is a



see **CHANGE** next page ➡



Vendor profile of Street Roots vendor Frank, featured on their website.

➡ CHANGE from last page

peek into what the lifestyle of selling for StreetRoots and living in Portland is. These profiles are the most real and authentic bibliographies of some of Portland's impoverished population.

Meet Frank, a vendor who has been selling for Street Roots for over four years. He is grateful to Street Roots for allowing him to create his own source of income, though he has conflicted feelings about his city. "Home is where the heart is, home is where my head is, but the city has done everything in their power to make me feel this is not my home. They are not spending money in the right places and are marginalizing the homeless."

His profile reveals his goals and future plans. He wants to have his own New York-style Street Roots stand. He also wants to write a book about his life. "Maybe it will be called the Ballad of Frank Johnson — I've had an almost fictional life," Frank said in his profile.

Though the vendor profiles are not all written by the vendors themselves, they give readers an intimate look into the life of a street paper seller.

Along with the many archives accessible on the website, there are many community-based articles that keep readers up to date on local politics, economic statuses and important updates. Something that seemed unique to Street Roots was the "Housing" section of their newspaper articles. There, readers can learn more about the housing crisis and what people are currently doing about it. There will most likely be more support to the vendors if society can understand what the crisis is.

They also have a series that focuses on the well-being and housing stability of children and young adults. They call it "The Next Generation." This series is a compilation of opinions, news and stories. The most recent is a story about a small village of youths. One of the youngest but longest members is an 18-year-old named Austin. He was there since the village started.

He shares a tent with his cat, Socks.

In my opinion, this section of the Street Roots paper should be larger, it should be one of the first things that pop-up on its home-screen. Even though there are a lot of important topics to be discussed, the priorities of a street paper should be to talk about those living on the streets.

Berkeley Living

Berkeley, California is a more diverse community compared to Portland and Cincinnati. The weather is less severe, and more consistent. Little rainfall in the winter and sunny days in the summer can draw more homeless people to the Bay Area and California in general, increasing its homeless population. There are also many public transportation systems that are commonly used by the unhoused population. Along with bustling streets and sidewalks, there are a lot of parks and coastal spots to escape to.

Berkeley is home to the University of California, Berkeley. Recently the University has faced a lot of backlash from residents about the overpopulation of students and consequent housing problems. The University has more students than they can house, so it is not uncommon for students to end up living on the streets. Because of the high housing costs in the Bay Area, there are many people of all ages living in poverty.

Street Spirit

This Bay Area street paper is youthful. As soon as you click onto their website you notice that there are pops of color, loud images and a variety of stories. This paper is sold monthly on the streets of Berkeley and Oakland by around 60-100 vendors. Street Spirit papers are all about politics and policies that impact the community and the works of those in poverty.

"Our mission is to provide an economic opportunity for our homeless neighbors while also creating a platform where they can share their own stories." The paper was first published in 1995 and has had its ups and downs. Though they may be an older paper, they focus on the younger generations.

Youth Spirit Artworks



The paper is published by the Youth Spirit Artworks. They are an interfaith art jobs and job training program committed to empowering the young homeless and low-income members of the community. Though they were established in 2007, after Street Spirit, they have become an important aspect of the paper. It is possible that YSA involved itself heavily with Street Spirit because there is a large housing issue within the University leaving college students voiceless. This connection between the youth program and the street paper gives readers a completely different perspective on homelessness compared to the other papers. The youthful essence of the paper colors in what may be missing from StreetVibes and Street Roots, literally. A lot of this may come from the

fact that younger people tend to have more hope.

Street Spirit is looking out for its people. As soon as a user visits the website, the first resource that shows up is a button. "Eviction Alerts" will guide you to a site that informs people of encampment sweeps in Oakland. This information is important because it can help unhoused individuals to prepare and collect their belongings before there is a chance they could be taken away. Out of all three street papers, Street Spirit seems to provide the most support in terms of watching out for the homeless population. Their paper emphasizes the humanness of homelessness, they keep the lives represented vibrant with colorful and fun stories. The eviction alerts made readily available on the site ensures that the public is aware of who is constantly trying to take from these lives.

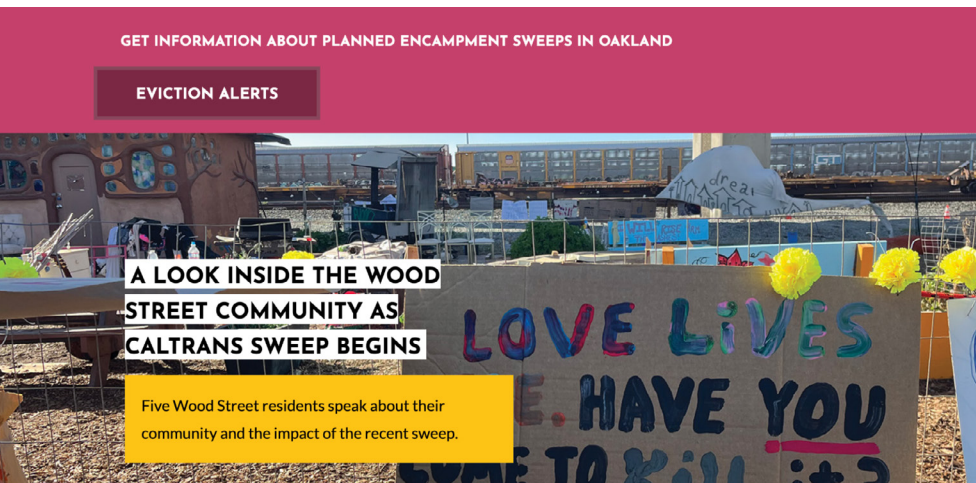
Every month the paper releases horoscope predictions. For example, I am an Aries and my prediction for October 2022 is that I am starting a divine and adventurous era, leaving my gentle and nurturing era. This month will give me momentary silence to keep me "still and vigilant." Horoscopes are a forecast of one's future based on their birthday. It is a way to be hopeful and goal oriented.

Along with these horoscope features, Street Spirit posts monthly event calendars. These events are mostly free and resourceful; this pulls homeless people into the community, allowing them to feel more connected. Street Spirit has so many stories and movements intertwined with resources and art, it keeps readers on the edge of their seats because there is always something different to expect. This vibrance is youthful, hopeful and more human when compared to the other two papers.

Three Papers

Obviously a street paper is a product of its community; that is where majority if not all of their content is from. But how much of an impact do these papers make back in the community? Well, given its content, how often they post, and where they are located, these papers make a difference. Even if small and obscure, street papers offer something to a person with almost nothing, and they offer something completely different to a person with almost everything. These three papers are creating and providing actual change. When a person purchases a paper from a vendor, there is an exchange of change. The person buying and handing the vendor actually money, gives the vendor change they can use to buy necessities, pay

see **CHANGE** page 13 ➡



Eviction alert on Street Spirit's website.

How street papers are changing homelessness

Many people ignore the homeless population, believing it doesn't affect them. However, like any interconnected system, problems like homelessness affect every citizen through politics, government programs and everyday life. For this reason, in the context of all three of the street newspapers described below, I would define a community as anyone affected by the homelessness population in any given city. This includes many stakeholders — there are politicians that create legislation, the homeless population themselves, and anyone living or working in the city.

The reason I'm defining the community at such a broad level is to make the point that many more people are affected by homelessness than one would normally think. Obviously, there are varying levels of activity in a community. Certain stakeholders are directly impacted — for example, the homeless people themselves or the writers of the street papers. However, this does not exclude broader citizens from the community, who are all still certainly stakeholders in some capacity.



The Voice (Denver)

The first street-paper I'll examine is The Voice in Denver. With its incredibly high elevation, vast mountain ranges, and snow-heavy winters, Denver is a city of adventurers and people pushing the limits. Many of those that live in Denver are incredibly unique, contributing to its distinct culture. In many ways, the street paper The Voice embodies the characteristics of Denver, and even shapes the community itself.

The recent landscape of Denver's homeless population is vastly changing. According to The Denver Post, the number of unsheltered people in Denver nearly doubled from 2020 to 2021. This amount of change in a



community has a unique impact – as more people become homeless, each person becomes more of a statistic.

To this point, the role of The Voice is critical — after browsing through their articles and stories, it is clear this street newspaper really focuses on emphasizing the individuality of homeless people that may be lost with a growing population.

The Voice does an excellent job on shining light on other stakeholders in the community that the homelessness population in Denver affects. For example, one really interesting article shines light on a man named Adrian Michael. Michael is a Denver native and a contributor to The Voice. He specifically focuses on street photography, a unique art form.

Michael captures candid, slice-of-life moments, again attempting to showcase the individuals of the Denver community. Michael's story is fascinating because of how connected his role is in the community. Not only does he capture intangible aspects of street life in Denver in a beautiful fashion, but also he has a role of sharing this art in order to make sure no one forgets that homeless people in Denver are just that: people. This example demonstrates two ideas.

First, The Voice shines light on people in the community who aren't necessarily homeless, but still play an integral role in the community. In short, they spotlight a more inclusive, authentic look at Denver's community. Secondly, it showcases how the street paper truly attempts to humanize the situation and that there are beautiful, positive things being created out of a negative situation.

While The Voice does an incredible job of spotlighting other stakeholders, humanizing homeless people themselves is another impact the paper has on the community. Their articles focus on telling individual stories. One particular story that stood out to me was John Torres — this man lost his leg due to diabetes and sepsis. On the surface, one may assume that because of this situation John would simply give up, do nothing to find housing, and stay in his situation



John Torres dumpster dives to make a living on the street. The Denver Voice ran an article entitled "Transforming the discarded" in September 2022 on Torres and his hustle. Photo credit: Giles Clasen.

forever. Rather than leading you to pity John for his situation, The Voice shines a light on how John Torres is working to improve his situation. In the article, John is shown working hard as he collects scrap items from dumpsters, repairs them, and makes a living selling them on Craigslist.

The Voice humanizes people of the homeless community in Denver in a fascinating and effective way. Instead of giving the readers a sob story and asking for donations, The Voice explains how John got in his current situation, and then demonstrates how hard he is working to get out of it.

Beyond humanizing stories, The Voice engages the community. Accessibility is a huge problem. When it comes to income inequality, a big impact stems from the fact that not all people have equal access to information and resources. The Voice broadens its impact by making the newspaper incredibly accessible.

Firstly, their website layout is unbelievably easy to navigate without any confusion. As far as user interface and user experience design goes, The Voice is the top of the line. This is especially important to reach readers who have internet access but aren't necessarily tech savvy.

The website does a stellar job of accommodating multiple different parties. For example, if I'm looking to advertise in the newspaper, it's evident exactly where I can contact The Voice. If I'm someone looking to donate, I can do so in one simple click of a button. If I'm looking to become a vendor, I can navigate to that page without any confusion.

While these may seem like trivial benefits, The Voice makes access to the community inclusive. Without any barriers to entry or confusion about how to access resources, almost anyone of any demographic can use the website.

For those that want continuous updates, The Voice also has a newsletter option. As it relates to accessibility as well, this option makes it easy for the community to be constantly updated. Any community heavily relies on communication, but some people prefer different platforms. The Voice gives their customers options.

Megaphone Magazine (Vancouver)

For some economic context, Vancouver has unique issues with homelessness because of legislative issues. More specifically, the British Columbia area in general struggles with affordable housing legislation. According to an article by Bloomberg, Vancouver is facing a severe housing crisis — in 20 years, the baseline price of a home has nearly tripled. To afford a single family home in Vancouver, it is apparently necessary to have at least a \$300,000 income. For these reasons and many more, Vancouver has over 2,100 homeless residents.

Megaphone Magazine's role here becomes apparent — to reflect Vancouver's rapidly evolving homeless population and the subsequent impact on surrounding communities, Megaphone Magazine has an incredibly accessible and modern media solution. The Megaphone Magazine is explicitly focused on creating a "solutions-based" magazine in Vancouver.

Megaphone magazine is innovating on what a street newspaper does and can do. Of course, it provides local news and gives homeless people the option to become a vendor. But Megaphone Magazine's mission takes the idea of a street newspaper a step further. For example, they have an initiative known as the "Hope in Shadows"

see MAGAZINE next page ➡

➡ MAGAZINE from last page

photo contest. The magazine asks people of the community to upload portraits of Vancouver citizens for a photo contest. The best 12 pictures are then selected and put into a calendar each year. This "Hope in the Shadows" calendar can then be used by vendors as an alternative product to sell.

This unique initiative presents two benefits to the community. Firstly, it gives a tangible shared goal for members of Vancouver's community to achieve together. This again strengthens the community. Furthermore, it gives optionality to the vendors of the magazine. Having multiple products to sell gives depth and personality to what would've been an otherwise regular street newspaper. In short, it differentiates the community surrounding Megaphone magazine.

In today's world, joining communities online is easier than ever. However, a consequence of this reality is that the beauty of in-person events has been slightly lost. Humans were meant to interact face to face — that's what can create a tightly-bonded group of people. It seems that Megaphone magazine shares this sentiment. Building on the theme of strengthening community, another initiative that Megaphone magazine focuses on is bringing the community to real life. For example, one event they had is "Mocktails, Music, and Megaphones."

As it relates to the community surrounding homelessness in Vancouver, one fact has become apparent: Megaphone magazine is clearly driving the community by not only making it accessible, but also giving members a platform to connect with each other in person. It is events like this that ensure long term prosperity. While it may seem like a stretch, connecting people can raise awareness for issues such as homelessness. Megaphone Magazine's impact, in my opinion, is pervasive in every crevice of the Vancouver community.

Real Change News (Seattle)

Seattle is a city of opportunity — companies like Microsoft and Amazon attract millions of citizens to this ever growing city. With all this economic prosperity, you would never expect Seattle to have a notable homeless population. However, according to the Seattle government, there are 11,751 homeless people in Seattle. The reasons for this, like any homeless population, are multi-faceted.

Just like Denver and Vancouver, in the wake of a growing homeless

population, Seattle has a street newspaper aiming to fight for new solutions to stop a snowballing social and economic issue. Based on the Real Change News website and social media presence, it's obvious they're focused on a clear goal: real-world solutions. The Voice and Megaphone Magazine's articles focused mainly on homeless individuals and their stories. While Real Change News does have similar stories, they uniquely have many interviews with politicians themselves. For example, they interviewed both candidates running for the 37th legislative district in Seattle. When many people think about the stakeholders in the homeless community, it may seem paradoxical to think of politicians. However, Real Change News is focused on solutions, and legislative change is critical for many solutions to homelessness.

These articles are not one-time exceptions — Real Change News has a heavy focus on writing articles about politicians and political news. 60% of the articles in a recent issue were interviews with politicians.

Making true change is incredibly difficult. In essence, Real Change News is run more like a startup than any other street newspaper I've researched. In fact, they have a simple slogan that describes what they do: "Jobs, Journalism, Justice." For "Jobs," like many other papers, they provide support to homeless people with their vendor program. For "Journalism," their focus on politics and social change is unique. Finally, for "Justice" Real Change News has an incredibly involved advocacy group.

It's clear that Real Change News' focus is on legislative change based on their articles with politicians. To further their goals, their advocacy groups focus on actually following through: "On March 28, we filed an initiative for social housing onto the 2022 City of Seattle ballot." While most other street newspapers certainly make an impact through their vendors, Real Change News makes tangible impacts in a variety of ways.

Another example of Real Change News' focus on actionable solutions is their focus on creating solutions for health and hygiene problems for the homeless. One burden that homeless people in Seattle experience is the lack of public restrooms. Real Change News partnered with the University of Washington College of Built Environments to design and install "street sinks" for people experiencing homelessness. It is incredibly profound and important that Real Change News drive solutions that actually make a clear impact outside the scope of the vendor program. First, it gives their articles and advocacy initiatives legitimacy. Secondly, their work

genuinely shapes the community around the homeless population in Seattle.

Finally, similarly to The Voice and Megaphone Magazine, Real Change News has the best social media presence that I've ever seen for a street paper. Again, this makes each article far more impactful – their readers aren't customers, they're a part of a greater community. By engaging and supporting the in-person initiatives that Real Change News undertakes, they make the Seattle community surrounding homelessness tangible and strong.

Comparing all three street papers

Homelessness is a dynamic and complex issue to solve in America. Street newspapers are a creative,

see MAGAZINE page 13 ➡



Above: Megaphone Magazine cover from April 2022. Right: Real Change cover from November 2022.



Megaphone vendor Frank holding up the Hope in the Shadows annual calendar.

Street-*what*? Exploring street papers across the nation

Street Sheet

San Francisco, Street Sheet’s metropolitan community, is the fourth most populated city in California and 17th most populated in the United States and home to 815,201 residents as of 2021. San Francisco is the second most educated city in the country with over 44% of adult residents possessing a bachelor’s degree or higher. In 2020, the median individual income in San Francisco was \$95,000 with a median family of four income of \$138,550.

Technological innovation and tourism are driving elements in San Francisco’s economy. Silicon Valley, the tech center of the world, is located in the southern part of the San Francisco Bay Area. Additionally, given San Francisco’s frequent portrayal in media, film, and pop culture content, it’s landmarks are famous. The tourism industry occupies one in seven jobs in the city.

Homelessness and housing insecurity is a major issue in San Francisco. It has been at the center of many political debates in the past. According to The Office of the Mayor, San Francisco’s preliminary point-in-time count for unhoused individuals in 2022 revealed that 7,754 people are currently experiencing homelessness within the city. While this is a very high quantity, the data shows that there was a 3.5% decrease in overall homelessness from 2019.

Street Sheet’s content reflects San Francisco’s large population of unhoused individuals. Articles like “A New Path to Reclaiming the Block,” “Fighting Drugs with Drugs: A Way Forward for San Francisco,” and “Right to Recover,” refer to issues facing the homeless community, supported by data from PIT counts. Street Sheet’s home page also features images of citizens protesting and information about the city’s work group meetings, demonstrating how homelessness is a major political topic in the city.

However, one challenge facing the homeless community is law enforcement. Police are disproportionately arresting homeless individuals and relocating tents with sweeps. This predominant issue in the area was featured in three of Street Sheet’s printed issues. Such behavior is unfortunately expected in areas that rely on the tourism industry for income.

Street Sheet was founded in 1987 in San Francisco, California, as a publication for the Coalition of Homelessness. Street Sheet values literary creativity and utilizes the power of writing to help change poverty narratives and support the local homeless community.



REESE MARTIN
U-M Student contributor

Their content production ranges from news articles and creative writing to artwork and photography. Each category is showcased in Street Sheet’s printed issues. News articles and other written content may also be displayed on their website, along with the PDF version of printed issues.

Registered vendors are permitted up to 100 copies per week of the latest issue and are expected to sell each paper at a price of \$2.00. Street Sheet vendors are not required to buy the papers they sell, and they keep 100% of the profits earned during distribution. The Coalition of Homelessness also offers peer support, leadership development, and public education initiatives to help combat homelessness.

In San Francisco and other west coast cities, an ongoing concern within the homeless community is law enforcement. Three issues of Street Sheet’s paper featured on their website have discussed the disproportionate arrests of homeless individuals. Not only has Street Sheet produced news articles addressing the situation, but they’ve also included opinion and narrative pieces on the topic. In the July 15, 2022 edition, author Melissa Lewis interviewed an officer who disagreed with the police’s persecution of the homeless community in her article “Police Know Arrests Won’t Fix Homelessness. They Keep Making Them Anyway.” By including a police officer as a source, Lewis was able to create a new narrative about the law enforcement issue: people on both sides of the offense disagree with the marginalization of the homeless community.

One solution proposed in the article was that social workers be more involved with the homeless community — allowing them to act as more sensitive mediators between unhoused individuals and legal proceedings.

StreetWise

According to the 2020 census, there are around 2,746,388 people residing in Chicago — making it the most populated city in Illinois and the third-most-populated city in the

United States. The median household income was \$62,097 from 2016-2020.

Chicago has a very strong economy. In 2020, Chicago’s gross metropolitan product was \$770.7 billion, the third largest output in the country, behind New York City and Los Angeles. The metropolitan area includes 36 Fortune 500 companies, and the city relies on industries like transportation, distribution, manufacturing, printing, publishing, insurance, entertainment, financial trading and services, and food processing to support its economy. The tourism industry also attributes a large portion of the city’s income to its restaurants, skyscrapers, museums and waterfronts.

According to the PIT count from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 5,390 reported individuals were experiencing homelessness in 2020. Now, in 2022, that number is likely higher.

StreetWise is a street paper organization in Chicago, Illinois. Founded by Judd Lofchie, the first edition of StreetWise debuted August 24, 1992. In March 2020, StreetWise was included in YWCA Metropolitan Chicago portfolio of comprehensive human services. They also maintain memberships in the International Network of Street Papers and the Chicago Independence Media Alliance.

StreetWise produces a variety of content including written articles, artistic work, and podcast episodes. Vendors buy a magazine for \$1.15 and sell it for \$3.00, earning a profit of \$1.85 per magazine. Vendors may also keep 100% of tips they receive.

The StreetWise organization has employment programs to help those struggling with housing insecurity and unemployment. STEP into employment works to help individuals overcome barriers by offering resume & interview workshops, job coaching, transportation and uniform subsidies, and professional development advice. This program is partially funded by the City of Chicago Department of Family & Support Services.

StreetWise’s content reflects the multifaceted elements of Chicago’s economy while also highlighting the current issues facing the homeless community. For example, news articles like “For ‘Chicago Fire’ stylist Steyline Wills, the main job is about helping to build characters” and “Chicago Made brings film and TV production opportunities to residents,” highlights Chicago’s individuals and industries that are important to readers and creating new opportunities within the city.

Additionally, podcast episodes like, “Episode 7: Bugs Between your Teeth”

and “Episode 8: You’re SO Different,” tell the stories of various individuals and their experiences with homelessness. Due to the emphasis on economic success within Chicago, it is fitting that StreetWise chooses to feature career paths in their content and promote their STEP into employment program.

StreetWise’s slogan is “A hand up, not a hand out” — choosing to emphasize the concept that “anyone who wants to work has the opportunity to move themselves out of crisis.” Such language endorses the “bootstraps narrative,” insinuating that all homeless individuals need is motivation and a hard working attitude to alleviate their poverty.

According to Andrew Volmert and Theresa L. Miller’s research in Talking About Poverty: Narratives, Counter-Narratives, and Telling Effective Stories, the “Individual Drive Narrative” is one of the most common stories about homelessness to frequent popular media.

“The most dominant narrative about poverty in the United States centers on individual willpower and drive. This narrative portrays individuals’ life outcomes as the direct and exclusive result of their choices and effort. According to this narrative, with enough hard work, anyone can and will succeed. In this narrative, individuals are in control of how well they do and thus responsible for their lot in life. People living in poverty are poor because of their own ‘bad’ choices, lack of work ethic, and deficient values. They are blamed for their own situations and held responsible for getting themselves out of poverty.”

While StreetWise’s mission statement may not explicitly say that homeless individuals can “claw” their way out of poverty through motivation alone, the sentiment of their mission statement certainly supports the “individual drive” and “bootstraps” narratives described by Miller and Volmert through word choice and tone.

Not only is the promotion of such prejudices on a street paper’s website ironic (street paper organizations typically work to fight assumptions about homelessness and poverty), but it is also harmful to housed-people’s perception of homeless individuals in the Chicago area. StreetWise’s participation in such narratives may negatively affect the mental health of individuals experiencing financial insecurity and divide the community’s economic classes. This may, in-turn, harm vendor’s overall economic well-being because readers may feel less inclined to support relief programs

see **STREET** next page ➡

➡ **STREET** from last page

Street Sense Media

Street Sense Media’s home is Washington D.C., the capital city and federal district of the United States. Washington is estimated to have a population of 705,749 people residing in the city. However, the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area (the city and its surrounding suburbs) encompasses a much larger population of six million residents, making it the sixth largest metropolitan area in the United States. While it is more common for families to live in neighboring suburbs, those residing in the city had a median household income of \$90,842 in 2020.

D.C. thrives on a strong economy — the fourth largest metropolitan economy in the country. As expected, a large portion of jobs in Washington D.C are positions within the federal government. Aside from government and consulting careers, jobs within service organizations are common due the political environment of D.C. Nonprofit organizations, like Street

Sense Media, are also very common due to the political nature of D.C. and frequent discussions about public policy. Because D.C. is the capital of the nation, museums and national landmarks generate tourist income that attributes to much of the economy’s success.

According to The National Alliance to End Homelessness, D.C.’s homeless population is around 6,380 individuals on any given night.

Street Sense published their first article in November of 2003. Community volunteers, Laura Thompson-Osuri and Ted Henson, were the first to organize a street paper in D.C. in partnership with the National Coalition for the Homeless. Street Sense Media joined the Institute for Nonprofit News in 2020 to increase their reach and professionalism. Presently, Street Sense is the only paper in Washington D.C. dedicated to supporting the homeless community and combating poverty.

Street Sense Media produces a wide range of multimodal content such as film, illustration, photography,

podcast and theater. Each of these content categories offer abundant opportunities for community involvement and productive, creative expression.

Street Sense Media vendors are provided with free issues. They sell the papers for \$2.00 each, receiving 100% of the profits from their distribution efforts. Additionally, Street Sense founded a Case Management Services program in 2017. This initiative guides long-term vendors through legal barriers and issues relevant in obtaining housing, employment, and healthcare.

Essential resources for homeless communities are shelters and food drives. In Washington D.C., Street Sense Media recognizes the benefits of such organizations, and is currently using their platform to spread the word about these facilities. Two of Street Sense’s October posts, “Helping Rockville families find a place to call home: Inside the work of Stepping Stones Shelter” and “A seat for everyone: Street Sense Media chats with Silver Spring-based homeless services

provider Shepherd’s Table” they interview the staff in these organizations to provide the community with more details about each — potentially assisting families or individuals currently seeking aid.

While Street Sense Media’s content reflects the political atmosphere of D.C., the organization chooses to emphasize the issues facing the homeless community rather than Washington’s role as the nation’s capital.

However, Street Sense does produce content with D.C.’s relation to the federal government in mind. For example, articles like “It takes a whole village: ‘SHERO’ community walk celebrates community efforts to curb homelessness,” covers the importance and role of non-profit organizations in D.C. Additionally, current events in D.C. are already heavily covered by other journalists. Therefore, it is logical for Street Sense to use their platform to report on and advocate for those experiencing housing and financial insecurity within the community — a group that other organizations typically neglect.

➡ **CHANGE** from page 9

rent and survive. The person selling the paper provides knowledge and resources to affect change, change of perspective. All three papers offer this to their communities, but each has specific qualities that paint a brighter future.

Remember StreetVibes’ forum? Willa D Jones? StreetVibes is an amplifier. They provide a platform for the unhoused and impoverished community to stand on. StreetVibes creates connections; they focus on bringing together the personalities and words of the people in need. They allow

people to connect. Relationships are important to humanity. Feeling heard and being seen create a sense of belonging, it can be even more meaningful than a wrinkled up dollar bill. Building solid human connection is something that StreetVibes does a really good job at.

Street Roots keeps the outsiders in. The very unique vendor profiles create a window into a life that may otherwise be invisible to most. Street Roots provides readers with a resource to better understand the underlying causes (or roots) of homelessness. For example, the whole section reserved for housing crisis information is there

to expose society’s impacts. Keeping readers really informed about issues in the community, and how to combat them as a society, make Street Roots a strong advocative paper.

Finally, Street Spirit does its best to keep the community uplifted. With its youthful manner, pops of color and cheerful stories and features all roped into social justice issues and heartbreak, Street Spirit is the cheerleader that every struggling person needs. The horoscope posts, eviction notices, and easy to reach information about community events all give a sense of hope and membership. Both impoverished and well-off folks can come together within this paper to have a greater understanding of who we are as a society.

➡ **MAGAZINE** from page 11

user-friendly websites, and professional-quality social media presences. This makes it so that there are no barriers of entry for the communities in each city, making each community subsequently stronger and more authentic.

Each paper has similar goals of raising awareness and creating change. However, because cities have different personalities, each paper has unique nuances that reflect the difference of their respective communities. The most notable difference is what each paper’s content focuses on. The Voice and Megaphone Magazine share a theme of

stories of people within the community. Megaphone Magazine has many articles about homeless citizens of Vancouver. While The Voice has similar articles, they also tend to write about people who are doing work to drive change for homelessness, like Adrien Michael, the street photographer. Finally, Real Change News’ articles have a unique focus on Seattle politicians.

There is one lesson from these papers that is abundantly clear — through street papers, individual citizens can certainly work to help alleviate homelessness in many ways. There’s no excuse.





New York’s Street News, which allowed marginalized individuals to become newspaper vendors and create their own source of income, inspired the start of street papers all over the globe. In 1991, The Big Issue was founded in London. Since then, it has chained out to multiple countries such as South Africa, Taiwan and Australia. To compare and contrast these papers, I constructed the following competition.

Let the battle begin!

Follow along as some of The Big Issue street papers go head to head in three competitive rounds. First, they prepare to test their ability to effectively design a functional website by analyzing their strengths and weaknesses. Next, they compete to see which paper was most successful in reflecting on its community. Lastly, they plan to be “Originally Distinct” by sharing their charm and flair to end the battle once in for all. May the most effective paper win!

Getting to know our contestants

The Big Issue | United Kingdom: “Changing lives through enterprise.” With over thirty years of experience, The Big Issue United Kingdom prides itself on changing lives through enterprise. They work under a shared mission to create opportunities for the impoverished. Since 1991, they have succeeded in helping over 100,000 marginalized people make an income. Their mission remains to support social justice in the United Kingdom.

The Big Issue | Australia: “We help people help themselves.” Since 1996, The Big Issue Australia has supported the creation of work opportunities for their marginalized community. They run multiple social enterprises in hopes of granting the opportunity for people to earn their own source of income. Their goal is to build the confidence of marginalized individuals



FATEMA ALMOAMEN
U-M Student contributor

and strengthen their community’s connection.

The Big Issue | South Africa: “Change is in your pocket.” Founded in 1997, The Big Issue South Africa strives to support marginalized individuals in taking responsibility for their lives. They have successfully sold over 140,000 papers each year. Their operation supports micro-entrepreneurship within their impoverished community and plans to expand it. They hope to help the marginalized take control of their lives by generating their own income.

Round #1: Design complexity

Street papers greatly rely on the accessibility of their websites in conveying the urgency of homelessness. Their websites’ design and functionality build their foundation for success in the digital world. Vital information can be efficiently comprehended through an effective structure. Each paper will explore its strengths and weaknesses regarding the complexity of its design. What has it successfully mastered? Where can improvements be made? The paper with the strongest analysis will win this round!

Coming in third place is The Big Issue South Africa. Their website was packed with information. They had a tab for just about everything. Their visuals were unique and intriguing. They also had their latest issue at the very top of the website. That made it both convenient and accessible to their viewers.

The website was dense with information yet it lacked a sense of direction. For starters, there were advertisements covering some of the material and driving attention away from the actual content. Not to mention the overall busy layout. It lacked a sense of organization. There were articles being thrown at the reader everywhere they looked. It was simply overwhelming.

Taking second place is The Big Issue United Kingdom. Straight away, the viewers noticed a “Top Stories” column at the side of the page. It effectively captured the attention of the audience and alerted them of current world events. They also had a variety of tabs that took the viewer to different sections of their website.

They had multiple columns for the viewer to explore, but they all seemed rather crowded and took away from each other’s importance. There were photos and articles sprawled all over the website which could overwhelm the viewer. This led to their main issue — overcrowding. They had so much information packed into one page. This can be discouraging for new viewers.

The Big Issue Australia is an effective example of a simple and contemporary design. The United Kingdom can take notes regarding the concise layout of Australia’s website and perhaps implement that into theirs.

Leading in first place is The Big Issue Australia. They had a concise and clean website with little to no cluttering or overcrowding. Their website was contemporary which engaged well with newer generations. After all, it’s the newer generations who hold the greatest impact on the future. Most importantly, their website was not overwhelming at all. They utilized color blocking which enhanced the concise and modern feel of the website.

Sometimes simple designs are effective, but they can also take away from the content. Oversimplification was borderline present on Australia’s

website. There weren’t many tabs to explore on their website. This could potentially make the website boring or lack information.

Australia’s website managed to win first place mainly because of its concise and contemporary design. In comparison to South Africa and the United Kingdom, it was a breath of fresh air and easier to process. Congratulations to The Big Issue Australia for taking first place!

Round #2: Community Reflection

A street paper’s goal is to reflect on its community in hopes of initiating positive change regarding poverty and homelessness. However, certain papers integrate community reflection more effectively than others. While The Big Issue papers have many similarities, they reflect on their communities in differing ways.

Taking third place is The Big Issue Australia. They had a “community hub” tab that had multiple articles regarding current events, recipes and vendor biographies. This allowed the viewer to connect to the vendors and possibly sympathize with their situations. The biographies contained information regarding the vendor as well as the importance of The Big Issue in their lives.

They did include biographies, however, there weren’t very many of them. There seemed to be as many biographies as there were recipes. That took away from their ability to reflect on the areas of their community that they aim to help. Perhaps they can remove a few of the recipes and replace them with more vendor stories to ensure that coverage is being fulfilled.

Coming in second place is The Big Issue South Africa. Their website dedicated a whole tab to the vendors. They had photos of each vendor, and each photo contained a name and showed a biography when clicked on. The

see **ISSUE** next page ➡



➡ **ISSUE** from last page

image of the vendor stayed in the minds of the readers. In turn, it helped the viewer understand the vendor they were reading about.

While they had quite a few vendor biographies, they lacked mentioning much about them outside of their work for The Big Issue. That type of information could entertain and intrigue the reader.

Taking the crown for first place is The Big Issue United Kingdom. Their website had a vendors tab that was eye-catching and informative regarding their community. They displayed multiple vendor stories speaking about unique opportunities that each vendor may have experienced. For example, one of these features spoke about a vendor who was writing a Dungeons and Dragons-inspired sci-fi novel. By incorporating information like this, the vendors acquire personality in the viewer’s minds. This may lead them to empathize with the vendor which can be one goal of street papers.

Overall, the United Kingdom was worthy of first place. They effectively showcased their vendors’ character and personalities which helps the viewer to perceive them as more than just “homeless people.” Congratulations to the United Kingdom for receiving first place!

Round #3: Original Distinctions

Originality is key to flourishing in the media industry. When a paper is original, it obtains an intriguing character that may not be apparent in other papers. It captures and captivates the reader through unique distinctions. The Big Issue street papers tend to have similar layouts and characteristics, however, a few have their own charm and flair. Which paper will win this round?

Landing in third place is The Big Issue United Kingdom. Within their “vendor”

tab they had the “find your local vendor” feature. Upon clicking it, it may just seem like a map of the United Kingdom with red and yellow spots representing the vendors. However, it is so much more interactive than just that. For starters, the yellow “spots” represent vendors that are accepting online subscription sales. This can motivate the viewer to support the vendor in various ways. Once the viewer clicks on a yellow “spot,” a little side panel is revealed. The panel gives basic information regarding that specific vendor. It also gives their location as well as an option to buy a subscription from them. Not only was this map interactive, but it also allowed options for those who may not be able to get out and physically buy a street paper.

While this option sets them apart from the rest of the papers, it would have been great to see actual images of the vendors when clicking on the yellow “spots.” Instead, the viewers see the same image of the back of a person wearing a “Big Issue” vest. It could have been even more connecting if the viewer was able to see who they were purchasing from.

The United Kingdom could have taken second place, but they did lack details on their map which put Australia slightly ahead. Regardless, the United Kingdom stood out with its map.

Second place is held by The Big Issue Australia. They run multiple social enterprises focused on supporting the marginalized. Their website introduces six of them as well as links that lead to more information regarding each one. An intriguing program that quickly caught attention was the “Community Street Program.” The main aim of this program is to provide a safe environment for homeless people to participate in sports and make friends. They specifically chose soccer because it is a sport that ensures commitment and inclusiveness. Their program does not involve any prior skill which is incredibly helpful for inclusivity.

Leading in original distinction is The

Big Issue South Africa. They had an extremely creative take on their vendors’ talent. Their website had a “Vendor Art” tab which was inspiring and astonishing to look through. They claim that “marginalized individuals receive an outlet for creative expression.” They also accept donations of art materials. They dedicate a whole page to showcasing the art vendors have created. There are themes that can be clicked on to further show artwork within them. The work can even be purchased. Many of these pieces have thought-provoking names which can lead the viewer to dwell on the lives of the marginalized. South Africa provides a beautiful means of expression and income.

This could and possibly should inspire “The Big Issue” to further invest in creating expressive forms of income for those they serve. Perhaps a writer’s workshop could be next on the list. Marginalized individuals could write poetry or memoirs and profit from them — all while they are able to express their thoughts and journeys. Creativity can be empowering at times when homelessness feels belittling. It is a movement that can provide so much more than just ink on paper. Investing in creativity is risky yet rewarding.

In many cases, homeless people are shunned. Art speaks volumes and uplifts marginalized voices. Art could be their voice as well as their security. For supporting a creative expression and means of income, South Africa wins this round! Congratulations, South Africa!

The winner of “The Big Issue” battle is...

Each paper has its own means of approaching society’s injustices. They all appeal to their audiences in unique ways. Every country takes initiative in differing forms. The Big Issue is a global chain that provides opportunities for the hopeless and the homeless all over the world. It has inspired the creation of so many street papers and helped even more people. The United Kingdom, Australia and South Africa have all demonstrated that in the publication of their street papers. They have displayed their efforts to contribute to their community in varying ways. All three of them deserve to be applauded for their contributions to society!

In fact, there seems to be an even tie between these The Big Issue street papers! Each paper has its own strengths and weaknesses. The Big Issue United Kingdom did the most effective job of reflecting on its community. The Big Issue Australia’s design complexity was the most straightforward and accessible. The Big Issue South Africa had the most original and unique distinctions. All three of the street papers won a category and tied for victory! Who do you think deserved to win the battle of The Big Issue?

Editor’s note: You can vote online by scanning the QR code featured on page 3, and navigating to Aloamen’s article on the website.

THANK YOU FOR EXPRESSING GENEROSITY TO
GROUNDCOVER NEWS VENDORS THIS HOLIDAY
SEASON

IF YOU WOULD ALSO LIKE TO BLESS THIS
ORGANIZATION, YOU CAN MAKE A DONATION:
SEND US A CHECK AT 423 S. 4TH AVE ANN ARBOR, MI 48104
OR USE THE DONATE BUTTON AT GROUNDCOVERNEWS.ORG



Left: Mike (Toledo Streets vendor), Jay Gordon and Derek Allen (Groundcover vendors) at the Toledo Streets office holding copies of the 2022 calendar vendors sell for \$10 in Ohio. Right: Ben Stalets from Toledo kicked off the workshop with introductions and announcements.

Groundcover News visits Toledo Streets

Groundcover News had the opportunity to take a road trip and have a workshop with Toledo Streets, another nonprofit street paper, in Toledo, Ohio. I was one of the vendors who attended this workshop along with Jay, Derek, Justen, Lit, Ken, Hal and Snap. The trip was great; the fact that we were able to work fresh territory and in a different environment really really motivated all of us.

As soon as we got there they welcomed us with open arms. The vendors and the staff were very heart-warming with the greetings. It was really cool because normally when you travel like this and go visit another organization, people are standoffish, but not in Toledo. At Toledo Streets as soon as we walked in, people greeted us.

They rolled out the red carpet for us. The lunch was awesome — something that none of us had ever had before called a “walking taco.” It’s a taco inside



JOE WOODS
Groundcover vendor No. 103

of a bag of chips; add everything you want to it, mix it up and eat it either with a fork or with your hands. It was really really cool.

During lunch we talked about the organizations and they asked us questions — it was a beautiful thing. We got a chance to meet some top sales people, learn some different sales techniques. One vendor from Toledo, whose name was also Joe, made a “pitch-poem.” When he would make a sale, he would

rhyme or rap what he was saying to engage customers. Another vendor would hold a Toledo Streets sign and clip all his papers to the back, flipping in between the sign and the papers. We also learned the different products that they sell; similar to how Groundcover News vendors sell \$10 special editions (something they picked up from Groundcover News a while back). Toledo Street vendors sell \$10 calendars. The photos in the calendar were actually taken by the vendors themselves. They also have an auction for the artwork and portraits that they make.

So, Ann Arbor, don’t be surprised if vendors start selling Groundcover News calendars ... but ours are going to be \$20 if I have anything to say about it. Believe it or not, Toledo Streets allowed us to sell their product there. The executive director and the whole staff was awesome; they gave Groundcover vendors free calendars to sell. So you know

what? We did. Derek sold five or six, I sold about four, Jay and Justen capitalized on donations which was a beautiful thing. Then they messed around and found out that the buses were free. Anybody who knows me knows I love to shop ... so we caught the bus to the mall and I bought shoes.

I want to thank Lindsay, our executive director, Ben, the vendor manager of Toledo Streets, and everybody involved that helped get this going. And, of course the customers, because without you, the customer, we wouldn’t be in existence. Looking forward to more road trips to Seattle, Chicago, Portland and the International Street Paper Summit in Milan, Italy in September. I just want to say first, thank God for opportunities, “new cheese,” and you the customers — because without you there’s no me.

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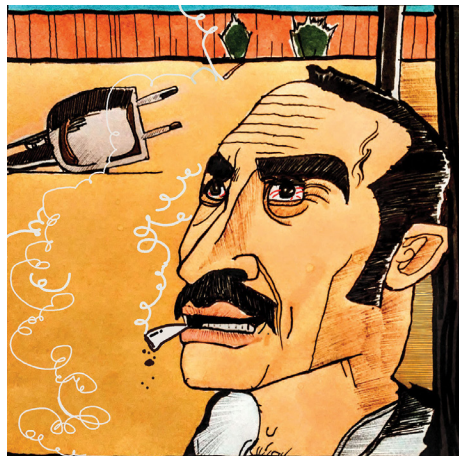
Art by Aaron Stielstra, Milanese illustrator



Podcaster



Ilaria



Smoking Man



Susanna



Fashion Man

While visiting home in October 2022 Aaron Stielstra met a Groundcover News vendor and submitted some of his artwork, as he was reminded of his local street paper in Milan, Italy: Scarp’ de Tennis. Stielstra was born in Ann Arbor, was homeless in San Francisco and Hollywood, California from 1996-1997 and is now recovered and married, living in Milan. He illustrates for several magazines and works in cinema. All works above are ink and pencil, with some modifications and coloring in Photoshop.